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# *Rongorongo* tablet from the Ethnological Museum, Berlin

by

Paul HORLEY*

ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to improve documentation of the* rongorongo *tablet VI 4878 from the Berlin Ethnological Museum. For the first time (to the best of our knowledge), we present the detailed digital photographs of the entire artifact almost at the original scale. The computer enhancement of these images helped to produce improved tracings that surpass the tracings published by Adolf Bastian (1883), Thomas Barthel (1958) and Steven Fischer (1997) by the number of documented glyphs. Analysis of the parallel passages shows that the Berlin tablet shares glyph sequences with so-called "Great Tradition" (Large Santiago/Large and Small St. Petersburg tablets), as well as with Aruku Kurenga tablet. Some particular sign groups from the Berlin tablet can be seen on the tablets Tahua, Echancrée, the Small and the Large Washington tablets.*

KEYWORDS: Easter Island, *rongorongo*, Berlin tablet

RÉSUMÉ

*Cet article vise à améliorer la documentation de la tablette rongorongo VI 4878 du Musée ethnologique de Berlin. Pour la première fois (à notre connaissance), nous présentons des photographies numériques détaillées de l'artefact complet à l'échelle quasi-originale. L'amélioration de la qualité de ces images sur ordinateur a contribué à produire des tracés d'un plus grand nombre de glyphes que ceux publiés par Adolf Bastian (1883), Thomas Barthel (1958) et Steven Fischer (1997). L'analyse des passages parallèles montre que la tablette de Berlin partage les séquences glyphiques de ce que l'on appelle la "Grande Tradition" (tablettes Grand Santiago/tablettes du Grand et Petit Saint-Pétersbourg), ainsi qu'avec celle d'Aruku Kurenga. Certains groupes particuliers de signes de la tablette de Berlin se trouvent aussi sur les tablettes Tahua, Échancrée, et sur la Petite et la Grande tablettes de Washington.*

MOTS-CLÉS : île de Pâques, *rongorongo*, tablette de Berlin

The *rongorongo* script of Easter Island (Rapa Nui) is a unique writing system developed in Polynesia. The oral traditions of the islanders « assert that Hotu-Matua, the first king, possessed the knowledge of this written language, and brought with him to the island sixty-seven tablets containing allegories, traditions, genealogical tables and proverbs relating to the land from which he had migrated » (Thomson, 1891: 514). However, the search of possible trans-insular origins of the script did not reveal any results supporting the external origin of the script. At the same time, the iconography of *rongorongo* signs pronouncedly matches the Rapa Nui petroglyphs (Fedorova, 1983: 45, fig. 2; Lee, 1992: 126-128; Macri, 1996: 184, fig. 19; Horley and Lee, 2008: 114, fig. 6), providing the evidence to Easter Island development of the script.

The existence of inscribed objects was first witnessed in 1864 by the first Rapa Nui missionary Eugène Eyraud (Fischer 1997: 12), but it was Tepano Jaussen, the Bishop of Tahiti, who realized the scientific value of the discovery and started the search for the survived tablets in 1869 (*ibid.*, 22). All known best-preserved *rongorongo* artifacts were collected in 1870; the tablets

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discovered afterwards were damaged to a considerable degree.

The tablet in Collections of the Berlin Ethnological Museum (Museum für Völkerkunde) has a special position in *rongorongo* corpus. It was collected as a consequence of Geiseler's Expedition that arrived to Easter Island in 1882 onboard the ship *Hyäne*. One of the foremost priorities of the Expedition, set by then-director of the Museum für Völkerkunde Adolf Bastian, was to procure more information about the inscribed tablets and, if possible, to acquire some of them (Fischer, 1997: 78-79, also 581: note 18). The principal Geiseler's informant on Rapa Nui, Alexander Paea Salmon, negotiated with the islanders about *rongorongo* artifacts and was able to locate several tablets. As the owners refused to sell the inscribed artifacts to the Expedition members, Salmon promised to buy the tablets after departure of *Hyäne* and to send them to Gustav Godeffroy, the German Imperial Consul at Tahiti, for further shipment to Berlin. Salmon managed to acquire two inscribed tablets but sent them to Valparaiso to Heinrich August Schlubach, the German Consul, who was the husband of Salmon's niece.

One of these tablets was sent to Bastian and arrived to Berlin on April 27, 1883 (Fischer 1997: 80). It was deposited to the Ethnological Museum under the catalog number VI 4878 (*ibid.*, 496). This artifact is usually referred in the literature as "Tablet O" / "the Berlin tablet" (Barthel, 1958: 27), "RR22" (Fischer, 1997: 494). It was also nicknamed "the boomerang" due to its particular shape (Imbelloni, 1951: 101).

Once the Berlin tablet « had to be one of the most marvelous *rongorongo* inscriptions ever produced [...] like the "Santiago staff" [...] its entire text probably ran contiguously without blank edges in some 26 lines » (Fischer, 1997: 497). However, it underwent significant erosion due to the action of the elements, which erased the majority of its glyphs. This poor preservation state became a considerable obstacle for proper documentation of the Berlin tablet, making it one of the "marginal artifacts" in *rongorongo* studies. This paper is aimed to improve the situation, providing the high-quality digital photographs of the entire artifact with new tracings based on computer-enhanced images of the tablet.

For the sake of uniformity, the paper uses Barthel's nomenclature to address the inscribed artifacts, lines and individual *rongorongo* signs. Taking into account that Fischer recorded sign traces for two lines before the first line documented by Barthel, it was decided to use Fischer's line numbering for this artifact (Fischer, 1997: 495-496). All tracings of *rongorongo* texts shown in the figures were made by the author unless otherwise noted.

**Documentation of the tablet**

The first sketch of the Berlin tablet was published almost upon its arrival to the Museum (Bastian 1883: Plate 1.4); the drawing was accompanied with the following caption:

« [...] by a kind donation of Mr. Schlubach (earlier [living] in Valparaiso), the Ethnological division of the Royal Museum (by negotiation of the Anthropol[ogical] Soc[iety] in March of [18]83) deposited a collection piece of very weathered wood, of which some of already visible signs are copied in their places, while the rest [of inscription] may become clearer only after prior preparation. »

The adapted version of this drawing is reproduced in fig. 1. The inscription survived in short segments clustered around a large knothole and four fragments located almost at the opposite end of the tablet. The drawing published by Bastian is quite difficult to interpret as it shows many glyphic forms unusual to *rongorongo*, which has two possible causes: erosion of tablet surface and unfamiliarity of the draftsman with the signs of *rongorongo* script. The general estimation of glyph number recorded by Bastian overcomes 180, surpassing 90 elements documented by Barthel (1958: 28) and approaching 187 glyphs documented by Fischer (1997: 496).

The photographs of the Berlin tablet were first published by José Imbelloni (1951: Plates 8a, general view and 8b, close-up) with the description:

« The tablet from Museum für Völkerkunde of Berlin [...] is a large and relatively narrow piece of wood, intensively curved simulating the shape of a boomerang, with the dimensions of: 1.03m long and more or less 0.13[m] wide. Almost all the surface is rot and weathered, in particular the face that bears inscription; [once it] was, as suggested by its aspect, a plank of a boat. Its worst conservation state erased the major part of the signs ... but it is still possible to distinguish quite a large number of them, in segments; they have covered the whole length of the tablet arranged in 7 superimposed lines [...] A simple calculation deduced from the capacity of a single section allows to affirm that [the tablet] should have contained a total of 1,260 glyphs, and it is really a pity that such an important text founds itself useless for the science [...] This artifact was never published. Prof. W. Krickeberg, director of the Berlin Museum, has kindly supplied me with 4 photographs (1 of the general view and the rest corresponding to 3 sections of its length) and I have thought

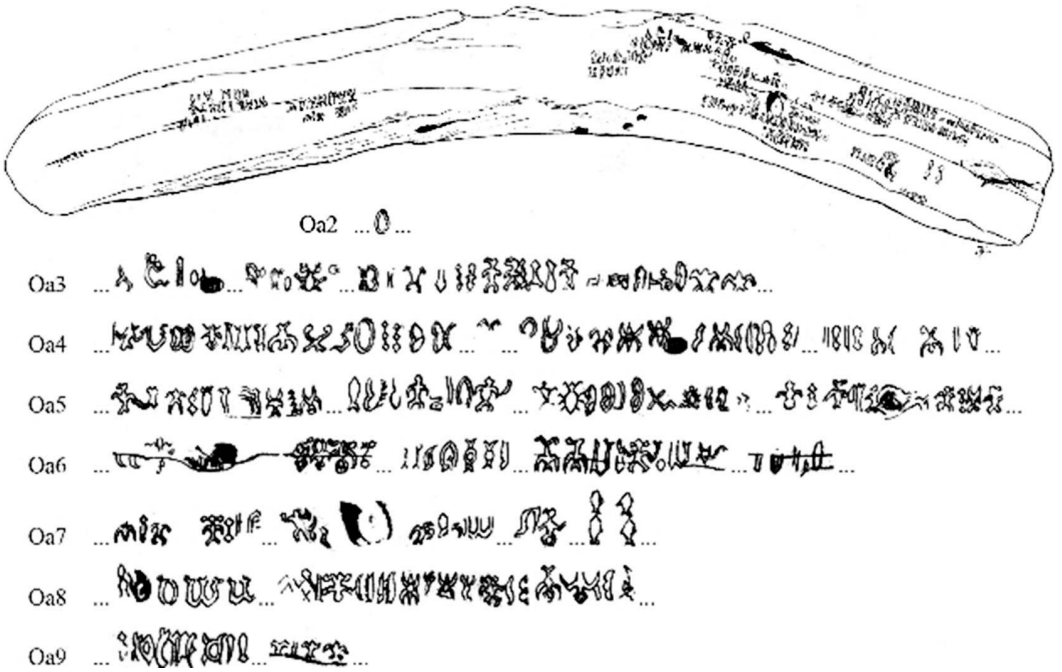


FIGURE 1. – First published drawing of the Berlin tablet (after Bastian, 1883: Plate 1.4): top – general view of the tablet; bottom – line-by-line transcription accompanied with line numbers according to Fischer (1997: 495-496).

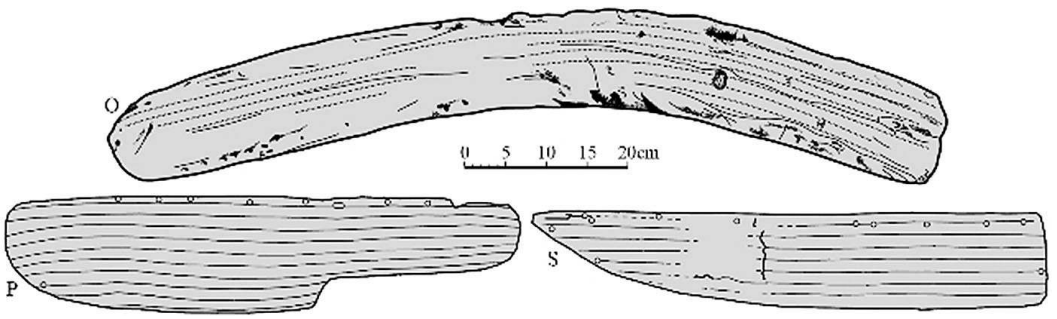


FIGURE 2. – Comparison of the Berlin tablet (O) with the Large St. Petersburg (P) and Large Washington (S) tablets; the two latter artifacts feature boreholes (drawn not to scale) at their top edges and sides used to pass lashing cords.

to reproduce them completely, but the difficulty to discern the signs caused me to give up. » (Imbelloni, 1951: 101)

Thomas Barthel (1958: 27) worked on illustrations from Bastian, Imbelloni, photographs by W. Lehmann and slides from the Berlin Ethnological Museum. He describes the tablet as follows:

« The backside [of the artifact] is completely destroyed, and the front side contains the remains of at least seven lines of characters. Presumably, there were 10 lines with a text of 1200 to 1300 elements – today only about 7 % of them can be identified with certainty (at most 90 elements). Even these remains still prove that it is a) a separate text, b) it is a classical style text. » (Barthel, 1958: 28)

Steven Fischer studied the Berlin tablet in 1991, making many important observations. He proved that the tablet was never used in marine carpentry:

« Imbelloni, Barthel and Helfrich believe the "Berlin Tablet" was originally part of a canoe; however, for this it is missing the necessary lashing holes as one finds on RR16 [tablet S, Large Washington tablet] and 18 [tablet P, Large St. Petersburg tablet]. » (Fischer, 1997: 497-498)

This point is illustrated with fig. 2 that schematically depicts the aforementioned artifacts. As one can see, both Large St. Petersburg (P) and Large Washington (S) tablets features numerous boreholes along their long edge; additional holes

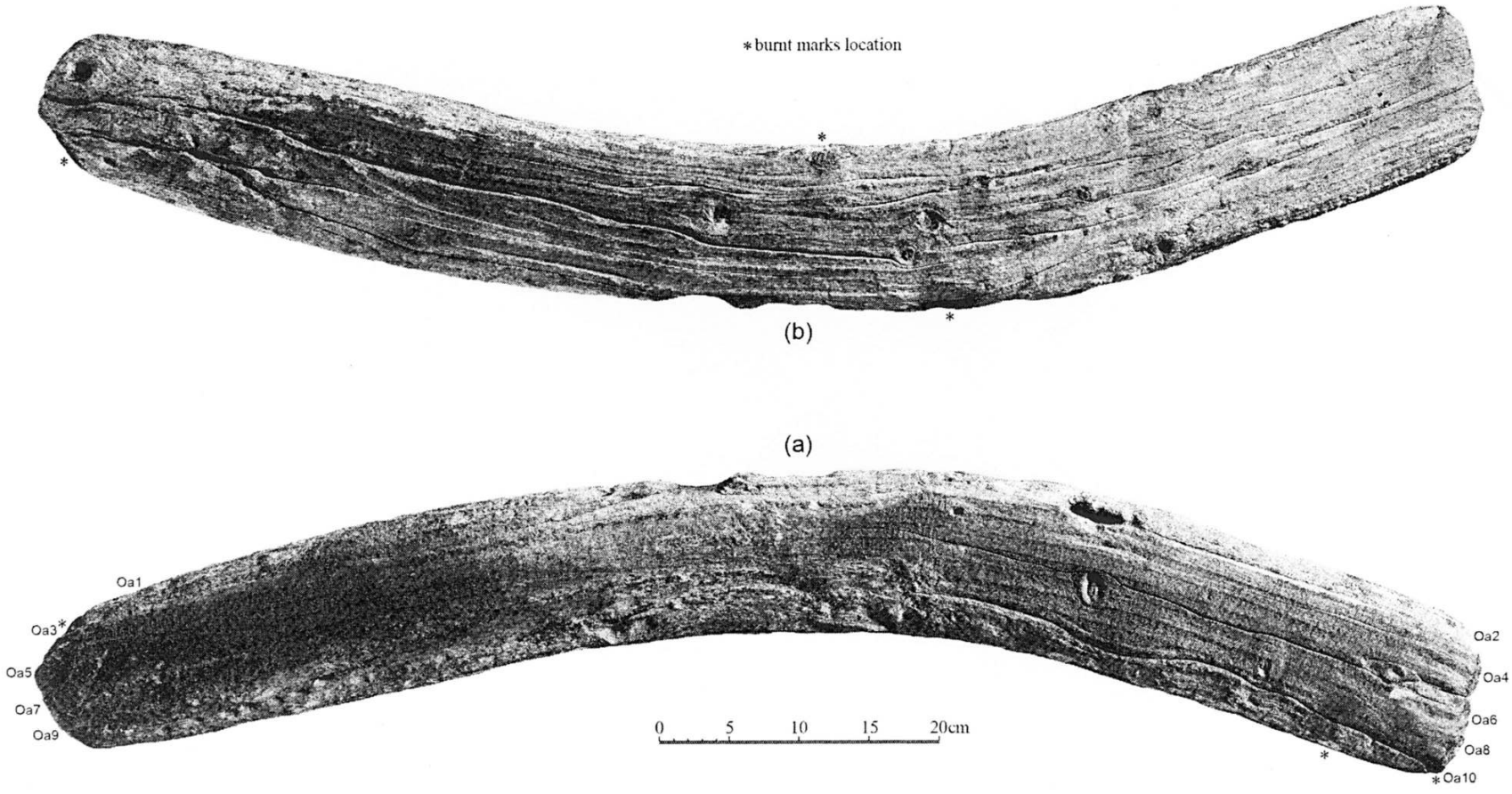


FIGURE 3. – Berlin tablet with *rongorongo* inscription. Wood, 6 × 103 × 12.5cm. Inv. VI4878 (photo by Claudia Obrocki, bpk, Ethnologisches Museum / Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Images are courtesy of Liz Kurtulik, Art Resource, New York. a) Inscribed side; b) weathered side with faint remains of fluting. Asterisks mark the burnt areas.

appear at the sides. The photographs of these tablets show that the holes postdate the inscription as they cut through the glyphs. The diameter of the holes is sufficient for passing the lashing cords. There even exist the photographs of Large Washington tablet (Heyerdahl, 1975: Plates 68c and 59c) with a cord passing through one of the holes. Additionally, the geometry of Large St. Petersburg and Large Washington tablets favors their use as canoe planking – the both artifacts are flat, straight and relatively thin: 2cm for tablet P (Fischer, 1997: 483) and 1.6cm for tablet S (*ibid.*: 472). The Berlin tablet is different – it is considerably thicker (5.2cm, Fischer, 1997: 496) and curved, which makes it unsuitable for canoe planking. Moreover, as pointed out by Fischer, Berlin tablet does not have even a single perforation (fig. 2).

Fischer's monograph (1997: 494-495, figs. 67-69) presents close-up photographs of the Berlin tablet. These pictures convey a good impression about the state of the artifact. However, as a meter-long tablet is shown in three 11cm-wide images, the resulting reproduction scale of about 30 % is not sufficient to discern individual signs clearly.

A particular difficulty in photographic documentation of the Berlin tablet comes from the combination of the factors – the tablet is large but its glyphs are small and eroded, requiring reproduction of the photographs at actual scale to achieve the sufficient quality to distinguish the signs. Thanks to the exceptional collaboration of the Art Resource (New York) and the Ethnological Museum (Berlin), Claudia Obrocki made a set of 35 Megapixel digital images of the Berlin tablet meeting all the aforementioned requirements. These photographs (figs. 3-7) allow for the first time (to the best of the author's knowledge) to publish the entire artifact in high image quality. Figure 3 presents the general view of the artifact from the both sides; detailed overlapping close-ups of inscribed side are given in figs. 4-7.

As one can see, the tablet is much eroded, coinciding with Fischer's description (1997: 497):

« Bearing some 25 knotholes, it was already greatly weathered and cracked before being incised with glyphs, suggesting that it had originally been a piece of driftwood. The wood is yellowish in colour where exposed; otherwise it is dark brown. Many glyphs are visible inside burnt edges, proving burning occurred (leaving at least five burnt marks) after the glyphs had been incised. »

The number of cracks is indeed impressive; however, not all of them pre-date the inscription. For example, a long crack passing by the large knothole following the line Oa6 (fig. 5) cuts through the signs, suggesting that it may postdate the inscription. The burnt marks reported by Fischer are comparably small and scattered around the edges of the artifact. To facilitate location, they are marked with asterisks in fig. 3. Two of burnt marks appears on the inscribed side at the beginning of line Oa10 (fig. 3a), the others are discernible on the back side of the artifact (fig. 3b): a burnt knothole at the middle of concave part, a dark spot located about a third of the convex part and yet another spot at the edge, extending to both sides of the tablet at the beginning of line Oa3. In addition to knotholes, cracks and burnt marks, the tablet also features shallow depressions, seven of which follows the line Oa10 (fig. 3a, also fig. 7).

The back side of the artifact is seriously damaged (fig. 3b). Fischer (1997: 497) suggests that:

« this is the side that must have lain face-down in the soil [...] The artifact was once finely fluted, though entire sections of the inscription are now so damaged that even the fluting is often no longer distinguishable. »

Indeed, back side of the tablet shows some faint traces of fluting, proving that the tablet was most probably completely covered with inscriptions.

The scholars disagree upon the number of lines composing the Berlin inscription. Fischer (1997: 496) reports that:

« [inscribed] side a [has] 7 visible out of at least 11 original lines, perhaps 12 if the edge have been used; [eroded] side b [once had] 13, perhaps 14 if the edge has been used. »

Barthel (1958: 27) states that:

« presumably, there were 10 lines [on the inscribed side]. »

Figure 3 shows clear traces of ten lines. However, it should be noted that line Oa1 (as identified by Fischer) starts at the top left part of the artifact (on the end opposite to that with a largest knothole) and goes to the right, which contradicts the common writing order:

« the reading should commence at the lower left-hand corner, on the particular side that will bring the figures erect, and followed as the characters face in the procession, turning the tablet at the end of each line, as indicated. » (Thomson, 1891: 516)

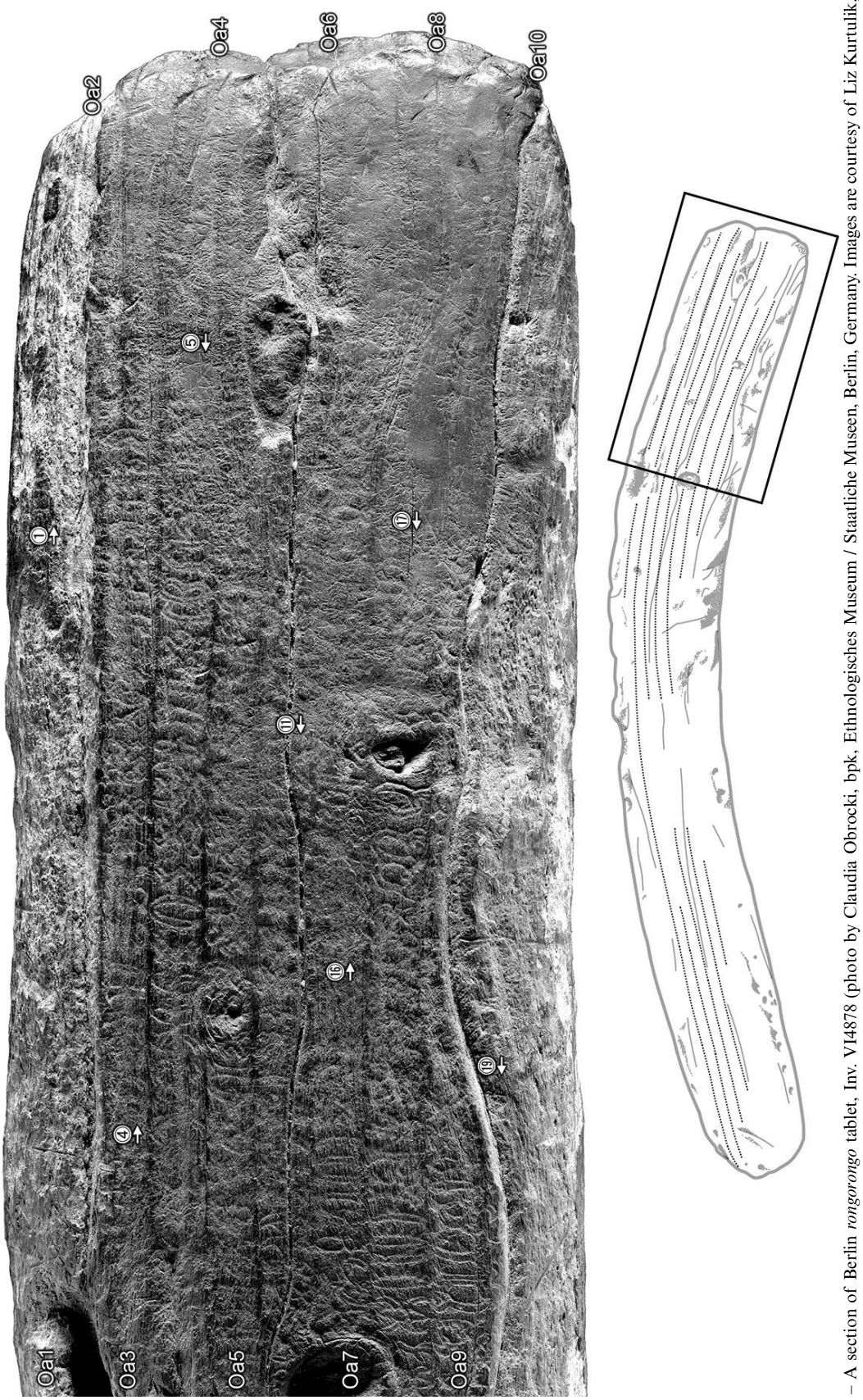


FIGURE 4. – A section of Berlin *rongorongo* tablet, Inv. VI4878 (photo by Claudia Obrocki, bpk, Ethnologisches Museum / Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Images are courtesy of Liz Kurtulik, Art Resource, New York). The numbers in circles mark the beginnings of the segments shown in tracings (fig. 8).

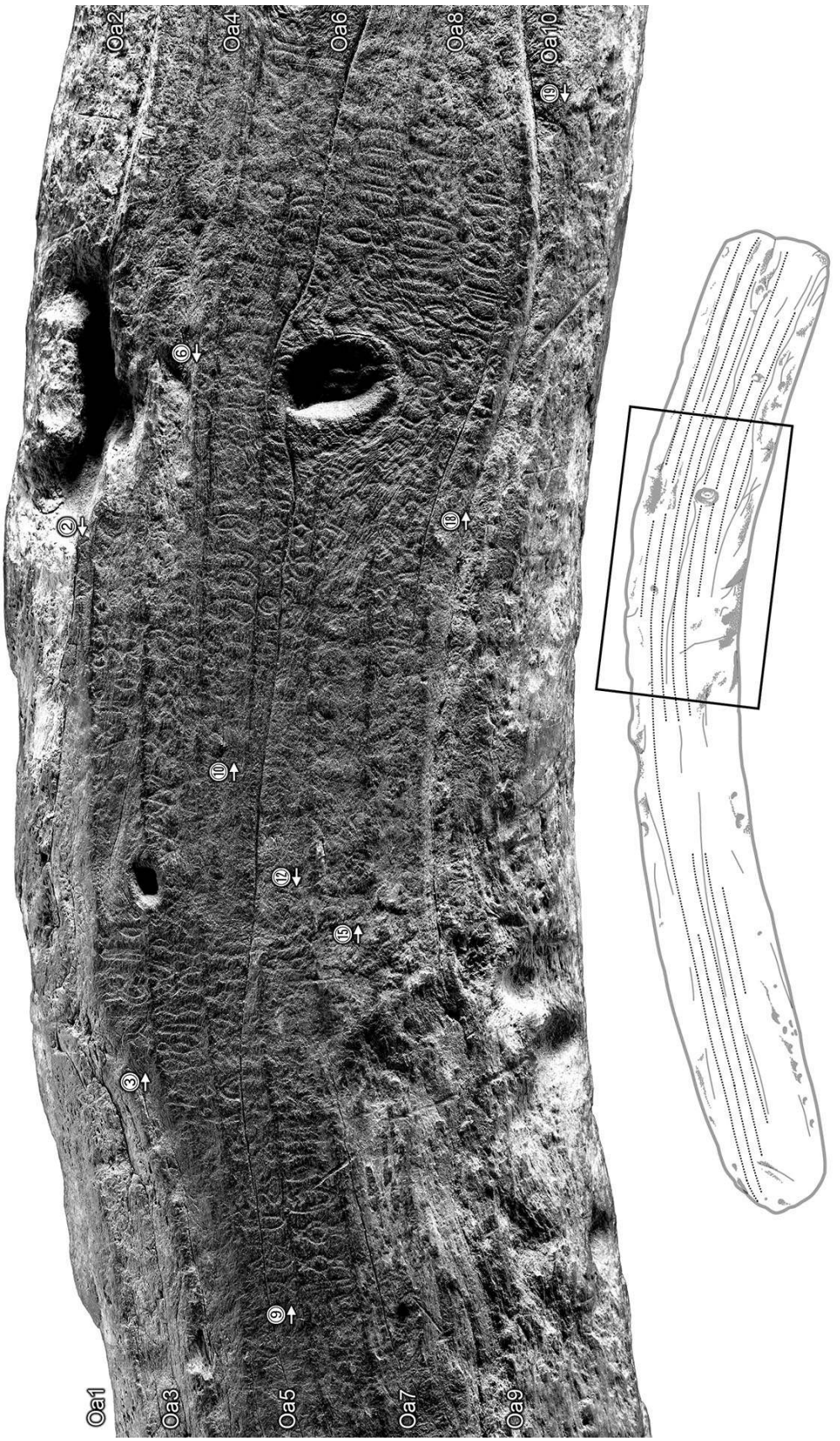


FIGURE 5. – A section of Berlin *rongorongo* tablet, Inv. VI4878 (photo by Claudia Obrocki, bpk, Ethnologisches Museum / Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Images are courtesy of Liz Kurtulik, Art Resource, New York). The numbers in circles mark the beginnings of the segments shown in tracings (fig. 8).

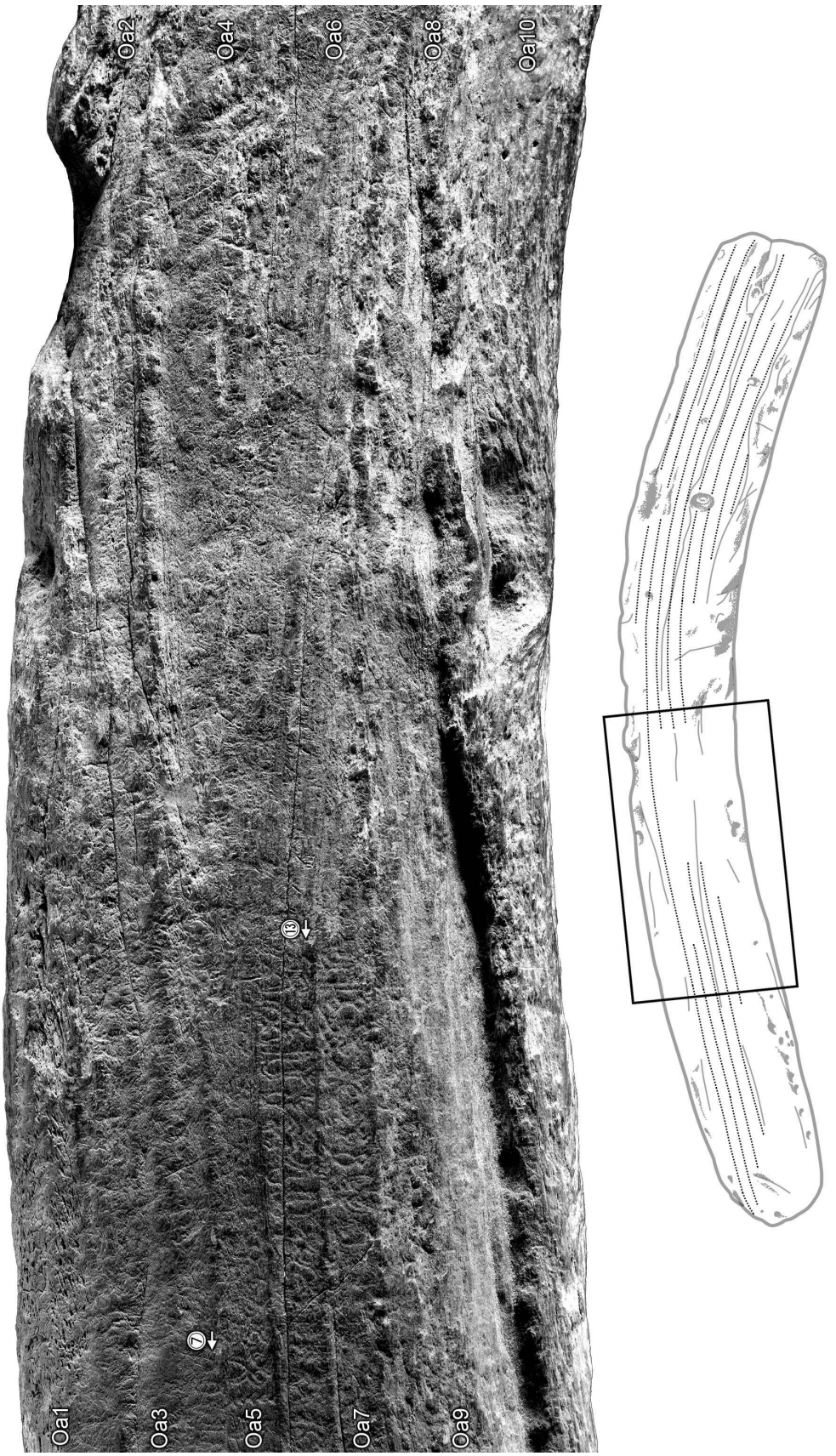


FIGURE 6. – A section of Berlin *rongorongo* tablet, Inv. VI4878 (photo by Claudia Obrocki, bpk, Ethnologisches Museum / Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Images are courtesy of Liz Kurtulik, Art Resource, New York). The numbers in circles mark the beginnings of the segments shown in tracings (fig. 8).

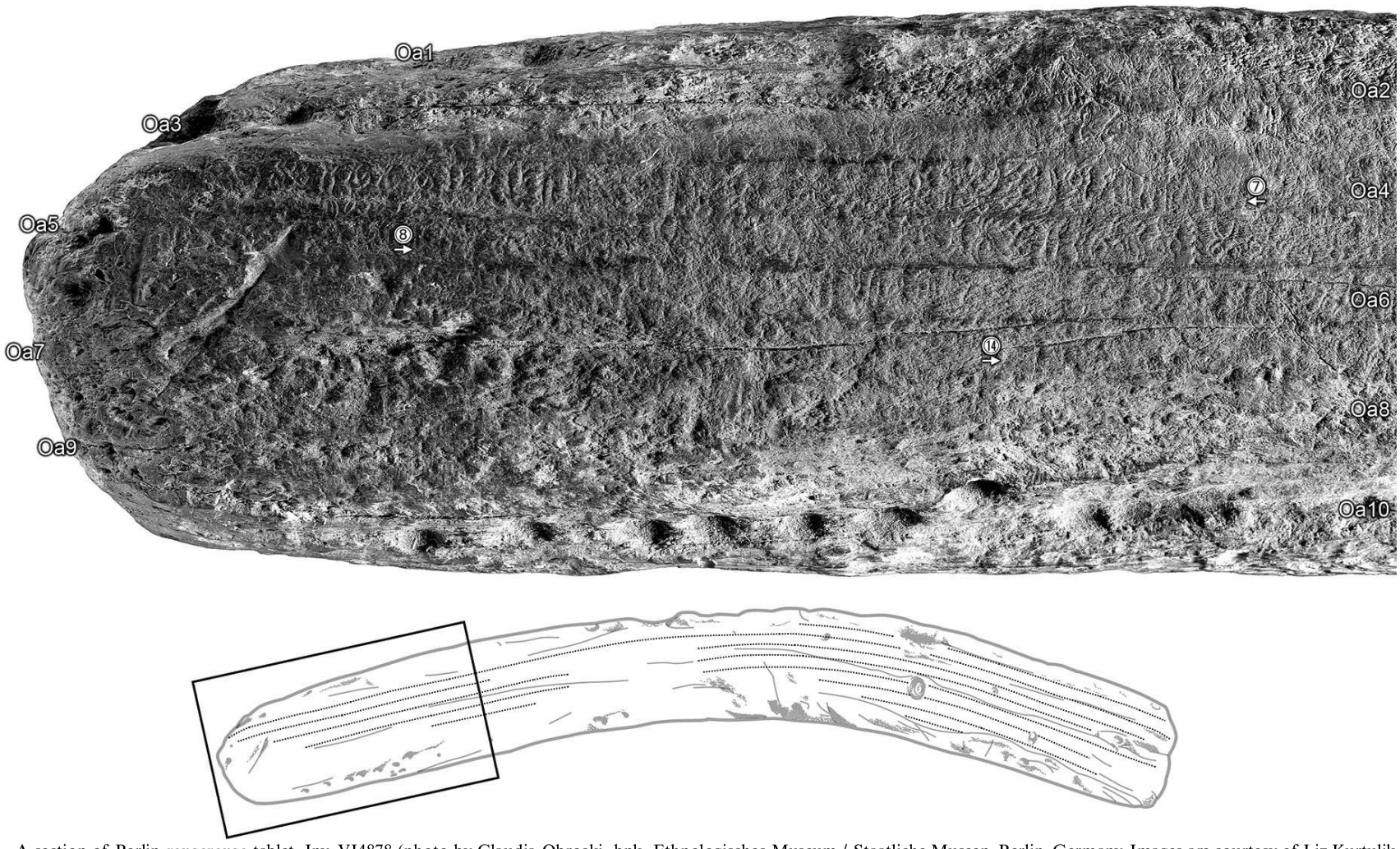


FIGURE 7. – A section of Berlin *rongorongo* tablet, Inv. VI4878 (photo by Claudia Obrocki, bpk, Ethnologisches Museum / Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Images are courtesy of Liz Kurtulik, Art Resource, New York). The numbers in circles mark the beginnings of the segments shown in tracings (fig. 8).

To fulfill these requirements one has to assume the existence of line Oa0 starting at the side with the largest knothole (i.e., upper right part of the tablet, above the beginning of line Oa2) and going to the left (so that the picture of the tablet in fig. 3a will show the artifact upside-down regarding the proper beginning of the text). In this case, the sequence of lines will follow that proposed by Barthel and Fischer. At the same time, one may notice that the line Oa10 does not reach the edge of the artifact as well. Therefore, most probably there was line Oa11 that commenced below the row of hollow depressions at bottom left corner of the tablet as shown in Fig. 3a and following to the right in complete fulfillment of first line identification criterion as cited from Thomson. If this was the case, the existing line order should be reversed.

However, there is not enough data to offer a solid proof for the correct line sequence of the Berlin tablet: there are neither parallel passages spanning over the neighboring lines nor traces of vertical glyph compression indicating that the scribe was limited from below / above with previously written line. Under these circumstances, one may only hope that proper line sequence could be revealed when *rongorongo* will be eventually deciphered. Meanwhile, it seems most useful to adhere to the line sequence proposed by Fischer, which accounts for the glyph traces in two lines before the first line documented by Barthel. We also expand the inscription with the line Oa10 that shows the traces of three signs that were not previously documented in the literature.

Addressing the bad condition of the tablet and considerable complications arising on producing the tracing of its text, Fischer writes (1997: 497):

> « It is difficult to draw the glyphs of this piece with reliability, since they are so greatly deteriorated. There are many glyphs that at this juncture simply cannot be adequately transcribed; however, computer enhancement will soon be able to achieve a new transcription, surely providing many more glyphs. »

Following Fischer's advice, the close-up images of the tablet (figs. 4-7) were subjected to multi-stage computer image enhancement including local histogram equalization with different processing window size, high-pass filtering and gamma adjustments performed for individual color channels. The resulting images were used to produce new tracings presented in fig. 8. To facilitate the comparison of tracings with the photographs, the beginning of each continuous inscription segment is labeled with number in a circle (with numbers ranging from 1 to 19); the corresponding numbers are also shown in figs. 4-7 with arrows denoting the direction in which the segment goes. This visualization technique appears particularly useful for location of short groups composed of incomplete signs, such as segment 1 (fig. 4) surrounded by completely eroded wood, showing the outline that can correspond to a star glyph 8. Fischer documents here the complete star glyph, also drawing a bird glyph in the same line (Fischer, 1997: 495), the traces of which were impossible to locate in the present study. In the same way, marking the segments in the photographs allows easy location of the glyphic group showing the tail and the wing tips of the bird belonging to line Oa10 (fig. 5, segment 19), surviving on non-eroded portion of wood close to the large knothole.

The present study documented 230 identifiable glyphs as well as 112 elements that do not allow unambiguous glyph transcription (e.g., legs of anthropomorphic signs without traces of head / hands). On the positive side, the aforementioned glyph elements clearly define the space allocated for particular sign, considerably narrowing the spectrum of possibilities for identification of the glyphs. Upon the eventual decipherment of *rongorongo* this information will allow to reconstruct the missing parts of the inscription to a considerable degree. Therefore, we can confirm the presence of approximately 340 glyphs and elements thereof, which introduces an improvement upon the previous highest glyph number of 187 recoded for the Berlin tablet by Fischer (1997: 496). The further increase of glyph count can be achieved using the special imaging techniques such as polynomial texture mapping (see Graeme, Martinez and Malzbender, 2010) capable of extracting more information from the eroded sections of the artifact.

To address the possible changes of the preservation state of the Berlin tablet with time, we have underlined the glyphic passages documented by different authors (fig. 8). If the tablet was in considerably better preservation state in 19$^{th}$ century, Bastian should have documented more glyphs (or more sections of the inscription) that is currently visible. As one can see, this is not the case. All the passages traced in 1883 (marked with dotted underline) are clearly seen from the modern images, confirming that the tablet did not undergo any pronounced deterioration during the past century. Barthel's documentation recorded only the signs with most prominent outlines, resulting in comparably

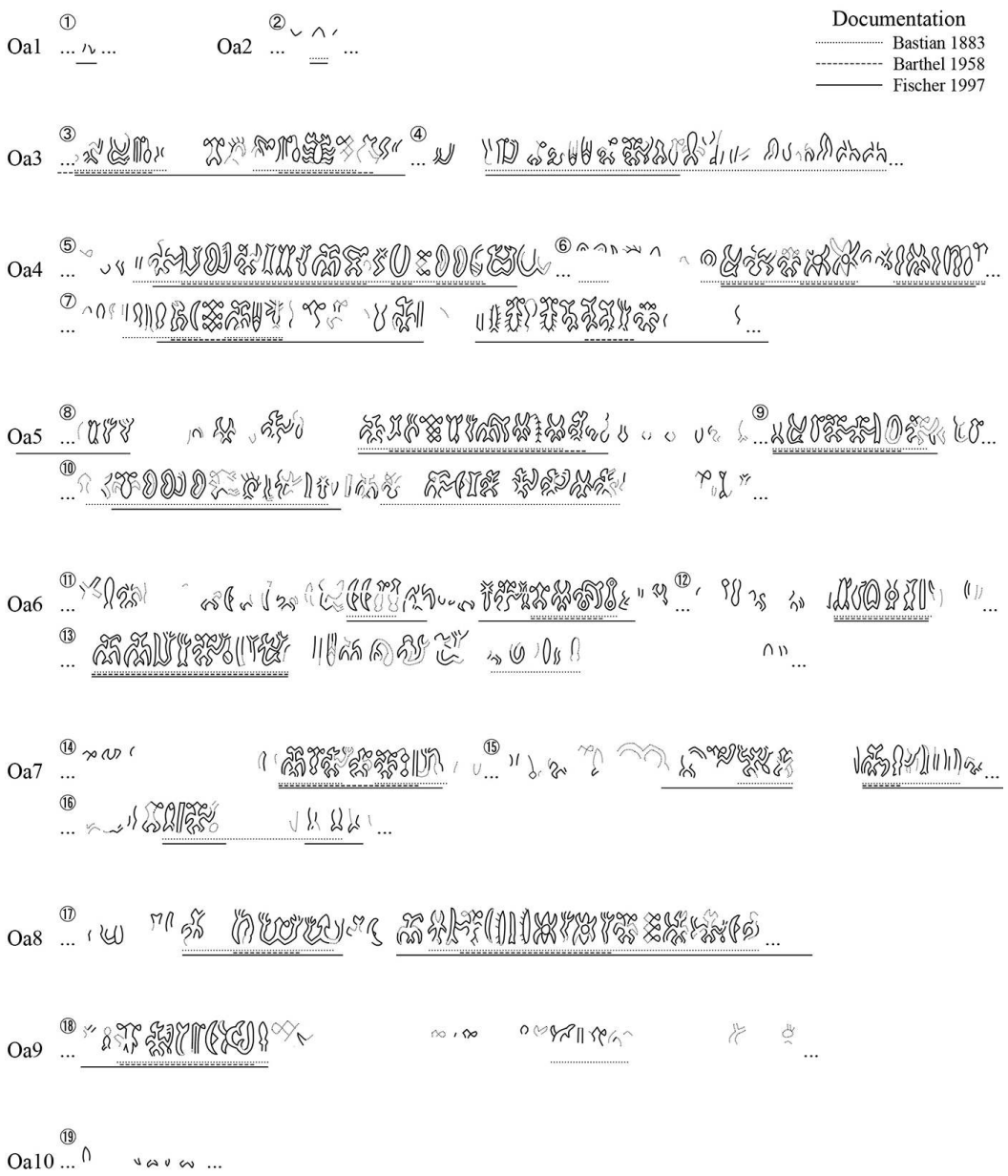


FIGURE 8. – Tracing of the Berlin tablet made after figs. 4-7. Line numbering follows that proposed by Fischer. The underlines denote the glyphs documented by Bastian (1883), Barthel (1958) and Fischer (1997). The numbers in circles correspond to inscription segments marked in figs. 4-7.

low glyph number. This fact can be tentatively explained if one assumes that the photographs available in 1950s (Barthel, 1958: 27) did not allow clear identification of faint sign outlines appearing in eroded sections.

The tracings published by Bastian and Fischer are more complete and based on direct study of the artifact. Curiously, Bastian recorded several passages that are absent from Fischer's drawings. These include the signs closing the line Oa3 (fig. 8, the second half of the segment 4), glyphs closing the surviving section of line Oa5 (fig. 8, second half of the segment 10), sign elements appearing in line Oa6 (fig.8, the last third of segment 13), and a small group of partially-survived signs in line Oa9 (fig. 8, second half of segment 18). Similarly, some of the text fragments documented by Fischer are absent from Bastian's publication and were impossible to confirm basing on the photographs available for this study. These glyphic passages include the end of line Oa4 (fig. 7 shows eroded wood from

the anthropomorphic sign till the end of the line), at the beginning of line Oa5, several signs in line Oa7 (ending the segment 15, fig. 8) and at the passage closing the survived portion of the line Oa8 (see fig. 5). In all aforementioned cases the solid underline corresponding to Fischer's documentation expands past the traced glyphic groups shown in fig. 8.

**Analysis of the parallel passages**

Fragmentary character of the text survived on the Berlin tablet complicates any comparative analysis. Fischer (1997: 498) mentions that

> «The affiliation of the "Berlin Tablet" to any recognized rongorongo genre is difficult to determine. It shares several pairs of glyphs with RR1 [tablet A, Tahua], [RR]2 [tablet C, Mamari], [RR]4 [tablet B, Aruku Kurenga], [RR]15 [tablet R, Atua Mata Riri], and [RR]18 [tablet P, Large St. Petersburg tablet] »,

without including any details about shared pairs of glyphs. Using the new tracings it became possible to find several short parallel fragments for the Berlin inscription, presented in fig. 9.

The symbol 106, composed with a vertical bar and a hollow circle, is quite rare in *rongorongo*. Two such glyphs can be seen in the Berlin tablet (fig. 9, line $Oa6_1$ including the similar sign 66b). Glyphs 106 and 66b are known from the "Great Tradition" (fig. 9, lines Pv9 and Hr2), where they appear in different contexts. One may guess on the compound nature of the sign 106, observing the similar glyph 105 – as a double bar superimposed with a hollow circle – from Aruku Kurenga (fig. 9, Bv6), written as a ligature 1:2 elsewhere (fig. 9, Pv3). The Berlin tablet has a rare ligature of two sitting men 380.380 facing each other (fig. 9, $Oa4_1$) resembling much the *manupiri* motif from Rapa Nui rock art (Lee 1992: 70); the other such ligature appears in Santiago Staff (fig. 9, Ia1).

*Reimiro* sign with an elongated appendage 7.10 from the Berlin tablet (fig. 9, Oa9) appears in various inscriptions but in different contexts (fig.9, Aa3, Db4, Rb4; see also Ab6, Sb4 and Sb6 that are not illustrated here). There is a considerable similarity between the sign groups 700-755-90 (fig. 9, $Oa5_1$) and 710-755-90 (fig. 9, Qv2) with the initial fish sign being of a slightly different shape ("straight" fish 700 in text O and "curved" fish 710 in text Q). Curiously, in the Berlin inscription two anthropomorphic signs 200 stand after the sequence 700-755-90, while in the text of Small St. Petersburg inscription the same two signs can be seen before this group. A short sequence of glyphs 724-739 is shared by the Berlin tablet and the "Great Tradition" texts (fig. 9, $Oa4_2$ and Hv5). There is also a vague correlation of anthropomorphic sign holding a star located several signs to the left from the glyphs 724-739. The sequence 600-400-4.64-6:700 (fig. 9, $Oa6_2$) is considerably reminiscent of the famous passage present on several artefacts (Pozdniakov, 1996: 301) illustrated here with the fragment from the Small Washington tablet (fig. 9, Ra5).

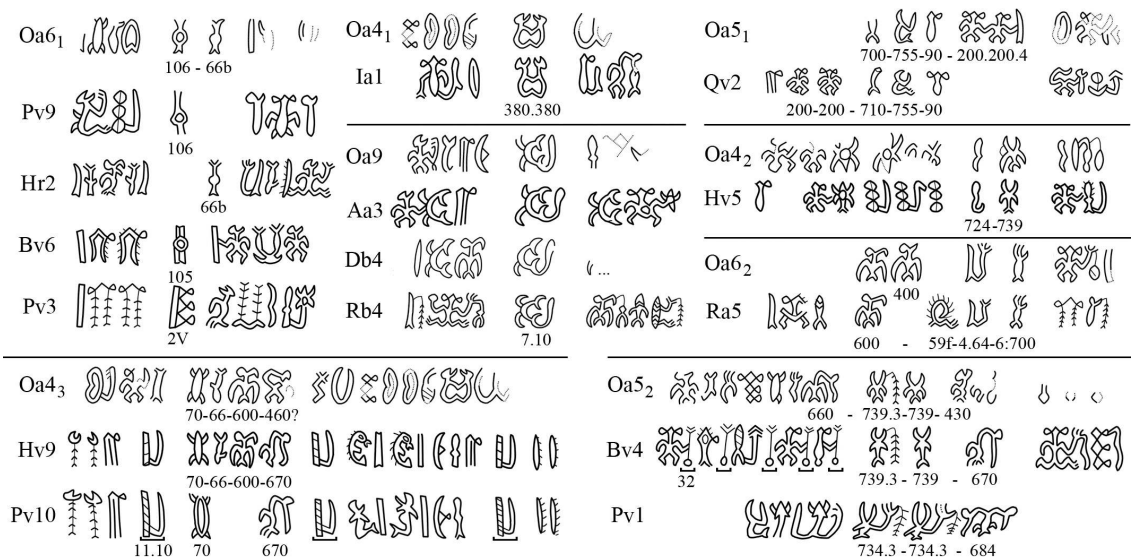


FIGURE 9. – Parallel fragments shared between the Berlin tablet and other *rongorongo* texts.

A considerably long fragment 70-66-600-460 parallels the Berlin tablet with the "Great Tradition" (fig. 9, $Oa4_3$). On the Large Santiago tablet it is written as 70-66-600-670 (fig. 9, Hv9), which is almost identical to that of the Berlin inscription taking into account that a gaping-mouth head on a long neck is an allograph of a bird head with a long beak (Horley, 2007: 30). It is worth noting that in the "Great Tradition" this sign group appears as an element in the list delimited with ligature 11.10 (underlined in fig. 9). Therefore, one can suggest that the sequence 70-66-600-670 is a stable glyphic group, which, in turn, may be of composite nature as it is abbreviated to 70-670 on the Large St. Petersburg tablet (fig. 9, Pv10).

Another parallel includes marine creature sign 739 that is particularly frequent on the Berlin tablet – 8 glyphs 739 are present in this text in comparison with 45 occurrences in the remaining corpus (Barthel, 1958: 148). One can see a considerable similarity of the sequence 739.3-739 in the Berlin and Aruku Kurenga inscriptions (fig. 9, $Oa5_2$ and Bv4). Importantly, the sequence starts after a structured sequence in Aruku Kurenga delimited with sign 32. This may suggest that the sequence 739.3-739 can represent a stable sign group. The sequence continues with a long-beaked bird sign 670 (fig. 9, Bv4); in the Berlin tablet the sequence continues with a chicken glyph 430. The following sign is half-erased but its contours can correspond to a long-beaked sign 670. On the other hand, there is a long-beaked bird 660 written just before the sequence 739.3-739 (fig. 9, $Oa5_2$). A related passage appears in the "Great Tradition", featuring duplication 734.3-734.3 followed by a long-beaked bird 684 (fig. 9, Pv1).

Therefore, despite the extremely fragmentary nature of the survived glyphic passages on the Berlin tablet, one can find quite a considerable number of parallels with the main *rongorongo* text composing the "Great Tradition" (tablets H, P, Q) and Aruku Kurenga (tablet B). Some prominent glyphic pairs are also shared with texts A, D, R and S. At the same time, the text of the Berlin tablet does not show the traces of abundant use of sign 76, which is characteristic to the texts I, Gv and T. These results seem favorable for a tentative inclusion of the Berlin tablet to the B-A-P sub-corpus of *rongorongo* texts (Horley, 2010: 220).

## Conclusions

The paper presents a set of high-quality digital photographs of the Berlin tablet, which allows to show the entire artifact at almost original scale with image quality sufficient to resolve the faint glyph outlines in eroded areas. The digital images were subjected to multi-stage computer image enhancement that allowed to produce new improved tracings of the Berlin tablet inscription, including approximately 340 glyphs (and elements thereof). All the signs documented by Bastian in 1883 are clearly visible on the tablet, confirming that the artifact did not undergo any considerable deterioration for the past century.

The new tracings were used to detect parallels between the Berlin tablet and the rest of the survived *rongorongo* corpus, revealing several glyph sequences shared by the inscription O with Large Santiago tablet, St. Petersburg tablets and Aruku Kurenga. Some ligatures from the Berlin tablet can be found on Tahua, Echancrée and Small Washington tablets. Taking into account a bad preservation state of the Berlin tablet, it is remarkable that the surviving fragments feature so numerous parallels with the other hieroglyphic texts of Easter Island.

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